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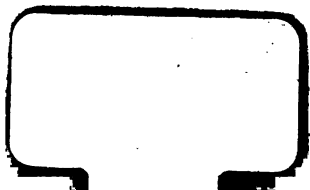
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THE
ADVENT OF QUAKERISM

FRIENDS' HOME MISSION AND EXTENSION COMMITTEE,
18, DEVONSHIRE STREET, BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT, LONDON, E.C.4.

1948

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... THE ...

Advent of Quakerism

BY

JOHN PEASE FRY, M.A.

LONDON:

J. S. FORSAITH & SON, 329, BETHNAL GREEN ROAD

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1908

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PREFACE.

THIS paper was written at the request of the Secretary of the Friends' Home Mission and Extension Committee, to be used as one of a Series of Lectures in the furtherance of its objects, and though not originally intended for publication, it has been left unaltered.

The writer desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to those from whose books he has quoted—such, especially, are: T. E. Harvey's "Rise of the Quakers"; E. E. Taylor's "Cameos from the Life of George Fox"; Robert Barclay's "Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth," etc.

The other Lectures of the Series now ready are: "The Life of George Fox" and "Early Friends as Social Pioneers" ("Elizabeth Fry, the Prisoners' Friend," and "William Penn" to follow), all of which are illustrated by Lantern Slides. About forty have been obtained for this particular paper, and these or any of the others may be borrowed on application to The Secretary,

FRIENDS' HOME MISSION AND EXTENSION COMMITTEE,
15, DEVONSHIRE STREET,
BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT,
LONDON, E.C.

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THE ADVENT OF QUAKERISM.

IT has been well said of Early Quakerism that its history is the history of a movement and not of a man. This movement, as we shall see, was towards a more simple and more spiritual form of religion than that provided by the reformed Churches of Germany, England or Scotland, or indeed by any of the numerous dissenting bodies in this country. The man in question was, of course, George Fox, "the man with the leather breeches," whose name is inseparably connected with Quakerism, and who is popularly known as the first Quaker.

Before we can properly appreciate his work, we must take a brief glance of the times in which he lived, and must look rather more carefully at the state of the reformed religion on the Continent and at home.

The Protestant Reformation on the Continent was begun in 1520 by Martin Luther, a monk of Erfurt, in Germany, and ended in the secession of a very large proportion of the people from the Church of Rome, and in the establishment of the Lutheran Church; that is, of the Protestant Church, freed from many of the false doctrines and abuses that had become part and parcel of the Roman religion.

But in Germany this reformation was not carried to its logical conclusion, partly no doubt because the clerical leaders of the movement were unable to free themselves entirely from the traditions in which they had been brought up, and partly because they were so largely dependent on the arm of flesh for their support. In other words, they had to rely on the help of those kings and princes whom they were able to win over to their side, and they were consequently never able to free themselves or their religion from the domination and interference of the state, so the Protestant Church remained as the Roman was before, and still is, paralysed by its craving for temporal power. It was largely as a result of this that Luther took up the attitude he finally adopted in 1525 in regard to the Reformation, viz., that it must proceed from without inwardly, and as to the Sacraments, that God had resolved to give no one the inward things save through the outward.

There were, however, in Germany, a number of spiritually-minded persons who saw that the Lutheran Reformation had stopped far short of the logical goal, and that the new church did not imitate the pattern set by the early believers. Among these, one of the foremost was Caspar Schwenkenfeld, a Silesian noble, a man of the most devoted life and character, who taught that the worship of God must be in Spirit and in Truth, and who held, in opposition to Luther, that the inward change must come before the outward things of Christianity could be rightly used, that the Sacraments were at least unnecessary, and whose views were also identical

with those of the Society of Friends, as regards the Inner Light and Immediate Revelation. There are to-day in America some eight hundred Schwenkenfeldians, whose ancestors emigrated there in search of religious liberty. Another and much larger body was that of the Mennonites, whose headquarters were at Amsterdam, in Holland. This sect was founded by Menno Simons in 1537, and though there were several points in which the views of the Mennonites differed from those of Friends, they were in the main similar. Silence was the basis of united meetings for worship, and generally in views and practice they sought to approximate to the pattern of the early Christian Church. Even before this date there were Baptists in Switzerland, and it seems that the church discipline of the Mennonites was borrowed from them. There was at that time a close intercourse between England and Holland, and it cannot be doubted that the teachings of those bodies of Protestants on the Continent who endeavoured to make the Reformation a truly spiritual one, had a far-reaching effect on the religious life of England. By 1626 there were churches at London, Lincoln, Sarum, and Coventry, on the lines of the Dutch Mennonites, and in correspondence with them, and evidence has been adduced to show that George Fox himself was not ignorant of, or insensible to, these influences. It is, however, safe to say that, whether he was aware of the existence of these sects at the commencement of his ministry or not, he preached and taught views in harmony with theirs, and that they had been in existence for *several* decades before he appeared upon the scene.

We all remember that the Reformation in this country originated in the desire of Henry the Eighth to obtain a divorce from Catharine of Aragon, and that when he found it necessary to disown the Papal authority he did not hesitate to do so, and that subsequently his desire to finger the wealth of the monasteries and religious houses played a no small part in the steps that followed, until a final breach with Rome and a consequent alteration in the government of the Church took place; a change for which the Reformation on the Continent gave not only a stimulus but an excuse. It is very evident that however great may have been the reforming zeal of some of the leaders of the Reformation in this country, it was originally a personal and political affair; and as on the Continent so in England; the Church remained as it is to-day—a State Church, and in Tudor times—that is, under the Protestant Tudors—the Reformation was subject to their “thus far shalt thou go and no further.” Elizabeth herself did not scruple to burn at the stake two Dutch Anabaptists, John Wielmacher and Hendrick Ter Woort, because they went too far. This was in 1575; and in 1593, Barrow, Greenwood and Penry were hung for being Separatists, and a bill was passed making it a felony to maintain any opinion against the ecclesiastical government.

Nor did the Protestant faith fare better under the Stuarts, for both the Charleses and James the Second were Romanists, and the state religion was thus at the mercy of contending political factions for 100 years before the commencement of George Fox's career, and a thorough reformation had never been effected by any political party.

The English have always been—let the agnostics say what they will—at heart a religious nation, and a series of religious movements have followed one another for centuries with persistent regularity. Chief among these are those of the Lollards and Wycklifites prior to the time of Fox, a century later came the Wesleyan movement, and we have, in our own time, seen the Welsh Revival at its height. But of all times the period with which we are now chiefly concerned was that of the greatest religious excitement. It was, as we have seen, on the one hand, so essentially a political movement, that it was a dominant factor in the lives of Dick, Tom and Harry; on the other, to all those who had a real care for the things of God, the State Reformation was incomplete, unsatisfactory and unsatisfying.

In 1554, we first note the rise of the Puritans; a body of earnest reformers within the English Church, who wished to further simplify the reformed religion. They were driven into exile by Queen Mary. Time will not allow us to follow closely the ins and outs of this movement, which by 1563 had become largely political. It had two chief results, one might say three; the first was the rise to power, culminating in the time of Cromwell, of the Presbyterians. These men sought to free the Established Church from the control of the State, and to gather in their hands all the power and all the emoluments of a State Church. Under the specious pretext of a free religion they sought to throw off all State control, and to exercise, unrestricted, a power of the most arbitrary and dangerous nature. It was against this faction that Fox and the Early Quakers waged a ceaseless strife; they

regarded the claims of the Presbyterians as far more dangerous to true spiritual religion than those of a State Church over which the House of Commons exercised a salutary control. The second great result was the formation of countless sects, each endeavouring to perfect the Reformation in its own way. The chief of these were the General Baptists, a sect with whom early Friends had much in common, and from whom a large proportion of the adherents of Fox were drawn. The Independents, the Anabaptists, the Seekers, the Ranters, the Muggletonians, the Johnsonists, the Brownists, may be named among many others. The third result was the emigration of the Pilgrim Fathers to America in search of freedom to worship God in their own way; but they had little real sense of the meaning of the freedom of the Gospel, for, a few years after their arrival, we find the colonists were the bitterest persecutors of the Quakers, and, as we shall see, several were actually put to death. Enough perhaps has now been said to show that at the beginning and during the middle of the 17th Century the religious life of the country was in a state of ferment. Politically it was equally unsettled, the reigning dynasty was arbitrary and Catholic, the people were on the whole Protestant and Puritan and in a revolutionary mood. The country was divided and devastated by the civil wars, the catchwords of the sects were on every tongue; the religion you professed was almost a matter of life and death; plots and penal laws were the order of the day. Such were the rough and ready times in which the Quaker movement saw the light. Both abroad and at home there were thousands of earnest men seeking to know the Truth

of God, and very many were meeting, often secretly, in small companies, in search of spiritual life, and many of the views afterwards so specially connected with the Society of Friends were held and taught by thoughtful men and women up and down the land, either individually or as part of the creed of their sect. The times then were ripe for a focussing of this religious feeling, for a fanning into flame of the true Light already shining in so many hearts and lives.

With the movement came the man to lead it, to guide and stimulate it.

James the First was still on the throne when George Fox was born at Fenny Drayton, in Leicestershire, in 1624. His father, known as 'Righteous Christer,' was a weaver, and quite well off for a man of that position; and his mother, whose maiden name was Mary Lago, was of the stock of the Martyrs. At the age of eleven we are told that 'he knew pureness and righteousness,' and his truthfulness soon became proverbial—'If George says "verily," there is no altering him.' As he grew toward manhood he experienced a state of spiritual unrest, and a hunger for a clearer insight into the inner meaning of religion. He sought aid from many ministers and professors of religion without obtaining much relief, and wandered up and down the country for nearly four years, till finally he was led, through times of trial and temptation, during which he prayed, meditated and fasted much, into the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ and His truth.

At last he saw clearly that "to be a Christian is to pass from death unto life"; that "there is only One,

even Christ, who can speak to every condition"; and henceforth he knew it to be his mission "to draw men off from the world and to bring them to the living Christ."

About this time he experienced a temptation only too common in this material age. All things came by and through Nature, but it was made clear to him that God is over all, and not only that, but that He is in us all. He realized that in every man, however lost and sinful, was what he termed the Seed of God; and he felt that the Spirit of God can and does move in the hardest and darkest of hearts. Although George Fox was in some sense a mystic and a seer, although he was upon occasion a prophet in the usual meaning of the word, as well as in its original sense of proclaimer of a message, he was a man of sound sense and good judgment. Having once grasped the central idea of God as the "All Father," working in and through men, he followed out to the full the resulting conclusion of the brotherhood of man. His views on the duties of men as Christians and citizens were extraordinarily sound and broad, and far in advance of those held by most men of his day and generation—especially when one considers how limited had been his educational advantages. Since all men are brothers, war must of course be wrong, and a recourse to force shewed a want of faith in the protecting power of God. Oaths, whether profane or in a law court, were alike forbidden; in the latter case because yea must be yea, and nay, nay for a Christian, and because the practice set up a false standard of truth. The sacraments, whether of the Supper or Baptism, were unnecessary to

the child of the Spirit who lived in daily communion with his God. But religion must be a thing not only of the heart but of the head; it must come into every action and every relation of daily life. And in support of these views George Fox worked hard, as well as in preaching the Gospel.

He was the means of founding schools for boys and girls; he advocated Poor Law Reform, the raising of the wretchedly low wages then customary (a labourer earned about 4s. per week); he objected to capital punishment, and did his utmost to secure an improvement in the vile prisons of the day, of which he had such terrible personal experience. He regarded labour as a source of national strength, and public houses as the reverse, and he protested against a practice then not very uncommon, viz., the trading in smuggled goods.

In support of these views he interviewed many persons and wrote numerous pamphlets. It may be thought from some of the practices adopted by early Friends, such as keeping on the hat, and saying 'thee' and 'thou,' that they were a fanatical and narrow-minded set of people, but this was not the case. These habits were the sequence of their desire for Christian simplicity, and were also a protest against the excessive formalities of the times. Fox himself had far too wide an experience of men and manners to be in the least narrow-minded, but he stood fearlessly for the right as he saw it, and did not hesitate to reprove wrong-doing, whether in priest or ploughboy. When George Fox had once set his hand to the plough he did not look back—up and down the land he went, preaching, praying and protesting against evil

men and evil lives, in season and out of season, through evil and through good report, exposing sin and vice, and calling men and women off from vain shows and dead forms to the living Christ, the Christ who died for them and rose again, and who now by His Spirit was moving the hearts of men. Great hardships and sufferings attended his labours; he was ten times imprisoned, and was often beaten, set in the stocks and otherwise maltreated, but of that more anon.

His ministry began in earnest in 1647, and two years later we find him imprisoned at Nottingham for interrupting the service in church. And here, let it be said, that it was the common practice at that time for persons who wished to speak in church to do so after the minister had finished, and this was particularly the case among the Presbyterians, against whom, as already mentioned, the Quakers especially directed their attacks; and though there were occasional interruptions by some of their early preachers during the sermon, a distinction is everywhere drawn between an interruption and a verbal encounter following a sermon, and the former practice is condemned. At Derby, in 1650, Fox was imprisoned under the Blasphemy Act; the immediate cause of this was a dispute at the close of a public lecture in the church. During his imprisonment he was visited by very many, and so great was his popularity and influence among the soldiers, that the authorities conceived the idea of offering him a commission in the Army then being raised to fight Charles II. (at that time Prince Charles) in Scotland. This offer he promptly refused, and was given six months in jail instead. On his release he resumed his missionary

journeys, and tremendous success followed his efforts as he travelled over the northern counties. Men and women flocked to hear him, and while numbers of the careless or indifferent were converted, many good-living people also were struck by the simple force of his teaching, and threw in their lot with the young revivalist.

At Pendle Hill, near Clitheroe, in Lancashire, he saw as it were a great people waiting to be called, and at Firbank Fell, near Sedbergh, he preached for three hours to a thousand persons. The results were marvellous, especially of the Firbank meeting, for no less than sixty men came forward as missionaries for the new movement. So rapidly did their teaching spread, that at the death of Fox in 1690 there were 60,000 Friends, or 1 in every 130 inhabitants of the country. In Yorkshire alone, on the passing of the Toleration Act in 1687, there were taken out licences for 400 meeting houses; and in Cumberland it has been computed that 1 in every 4 persons was a Quaker.

Besides Nottingham and Derby, Fox suffered long imprisonments at Scarborough, Lancaster, Carlisle, Launceston and Worcester, and although the hardships he endured greatly impaired his health, he found time to undertake missionary journeys to Scotland, Ireland, America, Holland and North Germany, and he had many extraordinary experiences and escapes. One instance may be mentioned where at Staithes, in Yorkshire, he found a priest who compelled the fishermen to pay him a toll on every fish they caught. After encountering this worthy, he went for a walk with him on the cliffs, and so strong was his sense of danger that

he took one of his supporters with him, believing that had he gone alone the reverend father would have pushed him over the edge.

He had six interviews with Oliver Cromwell, some more satisfactory than others, but which left a great impression on the Protector. In 1669 George Fox married Margaret Fell, the widow of Judge Fell, of Swarthmore Hall, near Ulverston, formerly a member of Parliament and Vice-Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Although he might now have rested from his labours, he did not do so. In fact, he did not even visit the Hall till 1675, when he went there for a long and much-needed rest of two or three years, during which he devoted much time to the writing of his valuable Journal, and we only hear of his going there once again before his death. It does not seem that originally Fox had any intention of founding a sect or society. His followers were the Friends of the Truth, and there was no sort of membership among them, nor was this likely at a time when they were so thoroughly detested and persecuted by those against whom their protests and preaching were principally directed. The rapid increase in the numbers of Friends very soon made it apparent that some form of Church government and discipline was absolutely necessary, and to the formulation of this Fox gave much time and thought, and so early as 1653, he tells us that some meetings for discipline were settled in the north of England.

It must be admitted that religious excitement, amounting in a few cases to mania, led to extraordinary conduct on the part of a few persons. The best known

case is that of James Naylor, who went so far as to personate the Saviour, and to enter Bristol riding on an ass. His case was brought before Parliament in 1656, with the result that he was convicted of "horrid blasphemy," and condemned to be branded on the forehead and flogged. In later life he bitterly repented of his errors and endeavoured to atone to his utmost for his presumptuous folly. Fox, though full of sympathy for the zeal of his followers, was always on the side of law and order, and wrote strongly to Naylor. Later on, the principle of the "Light within" led to a serious schism in the young Church; a strong minority held the view, that with the Divine Light within, every man must be a law unto himself. It was self-evident that such a line could only lead to disorder and the disruption of the new sect, and here again we find Fox firmly on the side of order and common sense. The secession which took place in 1675 was headed by Wilkinson and Story, and though most of the secessionists ultimately came back, it was a time of great anxiety, and the controversy was of long duration.

The closing years of George Fox's life were spent chiefly in London, and though much engaged in perfecting the organization of the Society, he did not neglect the Ministry. In 1690 he passed away. At the last a great peace possessed him, and he exclaimed, "All is well, the seed of God reigns over all, even over death itself"; thus ended the career of this remarkable man. Like all human beings, he had his faults, but they were rather due to excess of zeal and overstrung nerves than to anything else. In spite of his small educational and social advantages, he made his name a household word throughout the

length and breadth of the land. In spite of the determined opposition of magistrates, clergy, or sometimes of the government, he followed unswervingly the path he believed to be marked out for him. Ever forgetful of himself, he suffered persecution bravely, and cheerfully endured countless hardships by land and sea. Though only 66 when he died, he left an indelible mark on the social and religious life of the country. Carlyle imagined George Fox making his own leather breeches, and boring the holes for his needle with an awl, and thus writes of him: "Every prick of that little instrument is pricking into the heart of slavery and world worship, and the Mammon God, and into the lands of true liberty, were the work done, there is in broad Europe one Free Man, and thou art he."

And how did George Fox do the prodigious work of his busy life; not in his own strength, we may be sure; William Penn says of him: "He knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men"; and Dr. Hodgkin, in the concluding chapter of his "George Fox," says: "He believed, and his whole life was moulded by the belief, that he had a message from God to deliver to mankind." These are the keynotes to the harmony of his life.

Among the thousands who joined the Quaker movement in its early stages were many persons of education and influence, who gave most valuable assistance to the young society. The most familiar names are those of William Penn, the son of Admiral Penn. He is generally known as the founder of the State of Pennsylvania, in America, and as the originator of the policy, successfully pursued there for many years, of

treating the Red Indians as men and brothers; but he was also a fine preacher and writer. His best known work was entitled, "No Cross, No Crown." Robert Barclay, the author of "Barclay's Apology," was the son of Colonel Barclay, of Ury, in Scotland; though educated at a Jesuit College in Paris, he became a staunch adherent of the new faith, and, perhaps, its most powerful literary and theological advocate.

Thomas Ellwood, the friend of Milton, was another who wielded the pen in defence of Quakerism. Isaac Penington, son of a Lord Mayor of London, Thomas Aldam, and scores of others might also be named. We must not omit to again mention Margaret Fell, afterwards Margaret Fox, of Swarthmore, who has been called the Mother of Quakerism. The value of her influence in the troubled days of the young society cannot be over estimated. Her home was a rendezvous for the North Country preachers; she enlisted the Judge's great influence on their behalf, and after his death devoted herself with tireless energy to the cause. She did not, however, escape the general persecution, and was twice imprisoned, the second time for over a year, 1670-71, when she was released by Charles II.

One of the most remarkable things about George Fox's preaching was the magnetic influence it had on many of his hearers. Not only did it attract them by its spirituality and simplicity, but it fired them with his own missionary zeal. The result of the great meeting on Fir Bank Fell, in 1652, is thus described by E. E. Taylor: "It is an impressive picture, 1,000 people away on the summit of the bare Fells; the mighty

overthrow of all self and selfishness, the inrush of the Spirit of the Lord; the going forth from the North in twos and threes of 60 men"; for so great was the result of this effort, that, not only did the whole district become peopled with Quakers, but these three score men left home and friends, to spread far and wide this new and simple Christian message. Christ the Light that lighteth every man, the One who speaks to every condition, who calls men (now as well as then) away from the vanities of the world to a simple life of faith and self-denial; and God over all, and in and through all, blessed for evermore.

The best known among these 60 are: George and John Whitehead, Richard Hubberthorne, Edward Burrough, James Parnell, Francis Howgill, John Cam, Gervase Benson and John Audland.

North, South, East and West, the messengers went forth, and soon Scotland, the Eastern Counties, London, Bristol, and the West, were stirred by the preaching and doings of these new evangelists. The task they had undertaken was no light one, and the mission, though it met with great success, necessarily created a strong and powerful opposition. Not only did their teaching cut straight at the roots of all sorts of customs and abuses, but it dealt a shrewd blow at the interests and prerogatives of the clergy, and also caused many a household to be divided against itself. And all this when the country was in a state of political turmoil, and in terror of Popish plots and Jesuit intrigues.

A couple of instances of their work and its effects must suffice. Richard Farnsworth writes thus, to Margaret

Fell, of a great meeting held at Malton in 1653: 200 persons "met to wait upon the Lord, and did continue three or four days together, and did scarce part day or night. I was with them. Twice the mighty power of the Lord was made manifest—almost all the room was shaken."

The writer of a pamphlet, entitled, "The Querers' and Quakers' Cause at Second Hearing," published the same year in London, views this meeting from a totally different standpoint, and asks "whether, when about Malton there are towards 200 or 300 neglected their calling to compare notes of their entranced madness, it concerns not a church, nay a commonwealth, if it were no more than Pagan, to look to it and prevent the growth of further mischief?" As a practical result, at all events, "the men of Malton burnt their ribbons and silk and other commodities, that they might not be abased by pride."

In 1654 Camm and Audland, who had been a noted independent preacher, carried out a series of revival meetings at Bristol, and met with great success, but also with strenuous opposition. We are told by a contemporary that many were "pricked at their heart," "some fell on the ground and foamed at the mouth, and others cried out." Similar scenes were witnessed seventy-three years later in the same city when John Wesley preached there, and have been frequently noticed at times of religious excitement.

It is of special interest in this instance in connection with the origin of the name Quaker. We learn from the Broadmead Records: "Thus they coming as foretold

(that is to deceive, if possible, the very elect) were not at first known, but afterwards they were called by the name Quakers, from people's shaking and quaking that received them and their doctrine, and then they were fixed to their opinion after such a fit upon them. Thus this damnable doctrine, even denying the Lord that bought them, promoted by the Jesuits, and assisted by evil spirits from the devil, was founded." This extract happily illustrates one kind of opposition they met with, and how entirely unreliable may be the evidence of hostile witnesses and critics. On George Fox's own authority, we have a different derivation for the name Quaker. A certain Justice of the Peace at Derby said that the plagues were upon them for keeping him in prison, and Fox says, "This was Justice Bennett, who was the first to call us Quakers, because I bid them tremble at the word of the Lord." "It is, however," says *Robert Barclay, "a mistake to suppose that Fox and his mission were altogether unpopular; indeed, on one occasion, Fox tells us that when "warrants were all over the West Riding to take me, the constable having the warrant in his pocket told me of it," but instead of using it he stayed to the meeting.

Many of the statutes which aimed at the suppression of religious liberty or papal influence were still in force, and were ruthlessly used against the Nonconformists, while fresh ones were enacted. Such were the Blasphemy Act of 1650, the renewal of the Act of Uniformity in 1661, the Test and Corporation Acts of the same year

* The author of the 'Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth,' not the Apologist.

which required the reception of the Communion. In 1665 the Conventicle Act was passed, by which meetings of more than five persons were made illegal, and of which Thomas Ellwood says it was directly contrary to the Great Charter, and in 1666 the Five Mile Act, by which dissenting clergy were prohibited from going within five miles of any town. This completed the list of these repressive measures.

Under such laws, by 1660, 4,200 Friends were imprisoned, and from 1660-1685 no fewer than 12,316 were sent to gaol, and of these 321 succumbed to their sufferings. One of the worst cases in England was that of James Parnell*—one of the 60—who was deliberately done to death in Colchester prison. Here he was confined in a hole in the wall called "the oven," without any ventilation, and after ten months of suffering "he laid down his head in Peace and Dyed a Prisoner, faithful Martyr for the sake of ye Truth, under a persecuting generation, in ye year 1656."

Cruel as was the persecution in England, it was carried to greater lengths in New England, sometimes miscalled—the home of the free! Mary Fisher and Ann Austin were the first Quakers to land in America; they were promptly seized and their books burnt, and after five weeks in gaol were banished to the Barbadoes. This did not deter other missionary Friends from landing, and severe laws were soon passed against them. Several were brutally flogged, and some had their ears cut off, and finally, in 1659, M. Stevenson and Wm. Robinson

* NOTE.—The full account of Parnell's imprisonment may here be read from "First Publishers of Truth," p. 93.

were hung. Mary Dyer suffered the same death the year following, and W. Ledra in 1661. Others would have shared a like fate had not Charles II. intervened and stopped the persecution for a time. In spite of all, the new sect increased and multiplied on both sides of the Atlantic, and so great was their ardour that in 1665 we find Thomas Curtis writing from Reading: "Our little children kept the meeting up when we were all in prison, notwithstanding that a wicked justice, when he came and found them there, with a staff that he had with a spear in it, would pull them out of the meeting and punch them in the back till some of them have been black in the face."

Fox himself was imprisoned ten times, and it must be remembered that the prisons of 1650 were very different from those of to-day. At Dartmoor Convict Prison the cells are now lit with electric light, and the inmates can change their library books twice a week! Here is George Fox's description of Lancaster Jail: "An order was sent to the jailor to put me down into the dungeon among the Moss-troopers, thieves and murderers, which accordingly he did. A filthy, nasty place it was, where men and women were put together in a very uncivil manner, and not even a house of convenience to it, and the prisoners so lousy that one woman was almost eaten to death with lice." In 1670 occurred the trial of Wm. Penn and Wm. Mead in London, under the Conventicle Act. They were acquitted, thanks to the powerful defence made by Penn, and to the sturdy determination of the jury, who refused to be browbeaten by the Recorder and magistrates. Nevertheless they were fined 40 marks each for keeping

their hats on in court, and the unfortunate jurymen were each fined 40 marks for bringing in a verdict contrary to the wishes of the Bench—an interesting sidelight on the administration of justice 250 years ago.

Two years later the Declaration of Indulgence was passed, which for a time greatly mitigated the severity of the persecution; but it did not finally cease until the passing of the Toleration Act by James II. in 1687, when 1,460 Friends were released from prison. During this long period of persecution, which lasted nearly 40 years, the sufferings of Friends were borne with remarkable fortitude, and countless stories might be told, not only of personal heroism, but also of the marvellous way in which they were sustained in the time of trial or were delivered out of the hand of their enemies.

We must now ask ourselves what was the real meaning of this great revival, for such it undoubtedly was. What were the old truths taught with such convincing force and freshness that they compelled the adherence of 1 in every 130 of the people of this country? What in fact was the Early Quaker Message? It was in reality the natural sequence of an unfinished Reformation. The Reformation, as we have seen, stopped short as soon as it felt the fetters of state influence and the value of endowments, tithes and preferments. With George Fox, religion was purely spiritual, and, briefly, the chief points of his message may be summarized thus:—

1. The doctrine of the Inner Light. The 'Seed of God' is in every living soul; His Spirit in us moves every heart; Christ is the Light and Saviour not only of the world but of the individual.

2. The Bible is not God's only revelation. He also speaks to the hearts of men by His Spirit, convincing them of sin, and leading them to salvation through Christ the living Word.
3. Direct personal communion with God is therefore possible and necessary for every believing soul.
4. Primitive Christianity revived. All men and women are called to follow Christ wherever He may lead—in lives of honest industry and toil, or in lives devoted specially to His service. God is no respecter of persons, rich and poor may alike approach Him through Christ. The aid of, or intervention of a priest is not needed for this. No priestly caste is required, not forms nor ceremonies, since worship is a thing of the heart, and must be in Spirit and in Truth.
5. From these principles it followed that the "Friends of the Truth" must be the friends of all men. War must be wrong, when we are all children of God and temples of His Spirit. Injustice, dishonesty, and social evils, must be alike combated and overcome.

Such were the messages of the Early Friends; for these they struggled, suffered and died. Their times were not our times, nor their manners ours. They had their faults and made their mistakes; we do not seek to deny the one, nor minimize the other. But they held fast to the Truth as they saw it, and no man was able to make them afraid. And is not this message as clear and bright to-day as it was 250 years ago, and just as much needed?

Since 1650 God has been revealing more and more of his marvellous power and goodness through the discoveries of science, and in many other ways; but now, as then, He works by His Spirit in every human heart. In these days of rush and hurry—in the struggle for wealth and luxury and pleasure—in the fight of the haves against the have nots—when the plutocrat and the Socialist are equally ready to forget the golden rule, “Love thy neighbour *as thyself*,” He is more than ever calling us to a life of simple dependence on Him; to come into a place apart and rest awhile. As George Fox himself wrote, “Be still awhile from thy own thoughts, searching, seeking, desires and imaginations, and be staid in the principle of God in thee, that it may raise up thy mind to God, and stay it upon God, and thou will find strength from Him, and find Him to be a God at hand, a present help in the time of trouble and need. . . . Therefore all keep low in his fear, that thereby he may receive the secrets of God, and His Wisdom, and may know the Shadow of the Almighty, and sit under it in all tempests, and storms, and heats.”

To-day, when the nations of the world are groaning under the taxation which supports their fratricidal armaments (which in Europe cost about £250,000,000 per annum), are we called to remember that He has made of one blood all nations of men. To-day it is no easier than it was in 1650 to do justly, and walk humbly before our God. To-day our quiet meeting houses offer what no church or chapel offers, a place where men and women may meet in silence to hear the voice of the Eternal, whether speaking to them in the secret of their own hearts,

or through the uttered voice of prayer or praise; where worship ought to be, and often is, in its truest sense, communistic; where the worshipper may experience a spiritual harmony; where, as Professor Rufus Jones puts it, "The inner Spirit fuses the body of worshippers into one whole."*

The true meaning of Quaker worship has thus been portrayed in some wonderful lines by the poet Whittier:—

"I find it well to come
For deeper rest to this still room;
For here the habit of the soul
Feels less the outer world's control;
The strength of mutual purpose pleads
More earnestly our common needs;
And from the silence, multiplied
By those still forms on either side,
The world that time and sense have known
Falls off and leaves us God alone."

Surely this unique form of divine worship alone is enough to justify the existence of the Society of Friends. We do not claim that such a method is suited to all minds or all stages of spiritual experience.

"Some revel in solemn music and aisles where the light
is dim.

We worship the Lord in silence, and know we may
walk with Him."

As Friends of the Truth, we seek to know the Truth of God as it is in Jesus Christ; as it is through His marvellous universe around us; as it exists in every human heart—a well of water perhaps in dry and thirsty ground, but springing up unto everlasting life—a light shining, often in a dark place, but which

*"The Social Law in the Spiritual World," by Prof. Rufus M. Jones. Pages 192-3.

must surely grow brighter and brighter unto the Perfect Day.

Of the Eternal God, the All-Father, we surely believe

“That Thou, within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Where'er men seek Thee Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”

But though we must now bid farewell to George Fox and his Friends, let us not forget either them or their message. Their voices call to us across the centuries, and verily they have left to those who will have it a goodly heritage. Perhaps we cannot do better than conclude with the final sentences of three of Fox's numerous letters. From them we may catch a glimpse of his fervent spirit, and may hear an echo of his thrilling voice, or may perchance feel the magnetic touch of his love and sympathy in our own individual souls.

“Sound, sound the trumpet abroad, ye valiant soldiers of Christ's kingdom, of which there is no end! All the anti-Christ's in the kingdom of fallen men are up in arms against Christ!”

“I am a lover of your soul's eternal good, peace, and unity in the kingdom that stands in that Power which hath no end.”

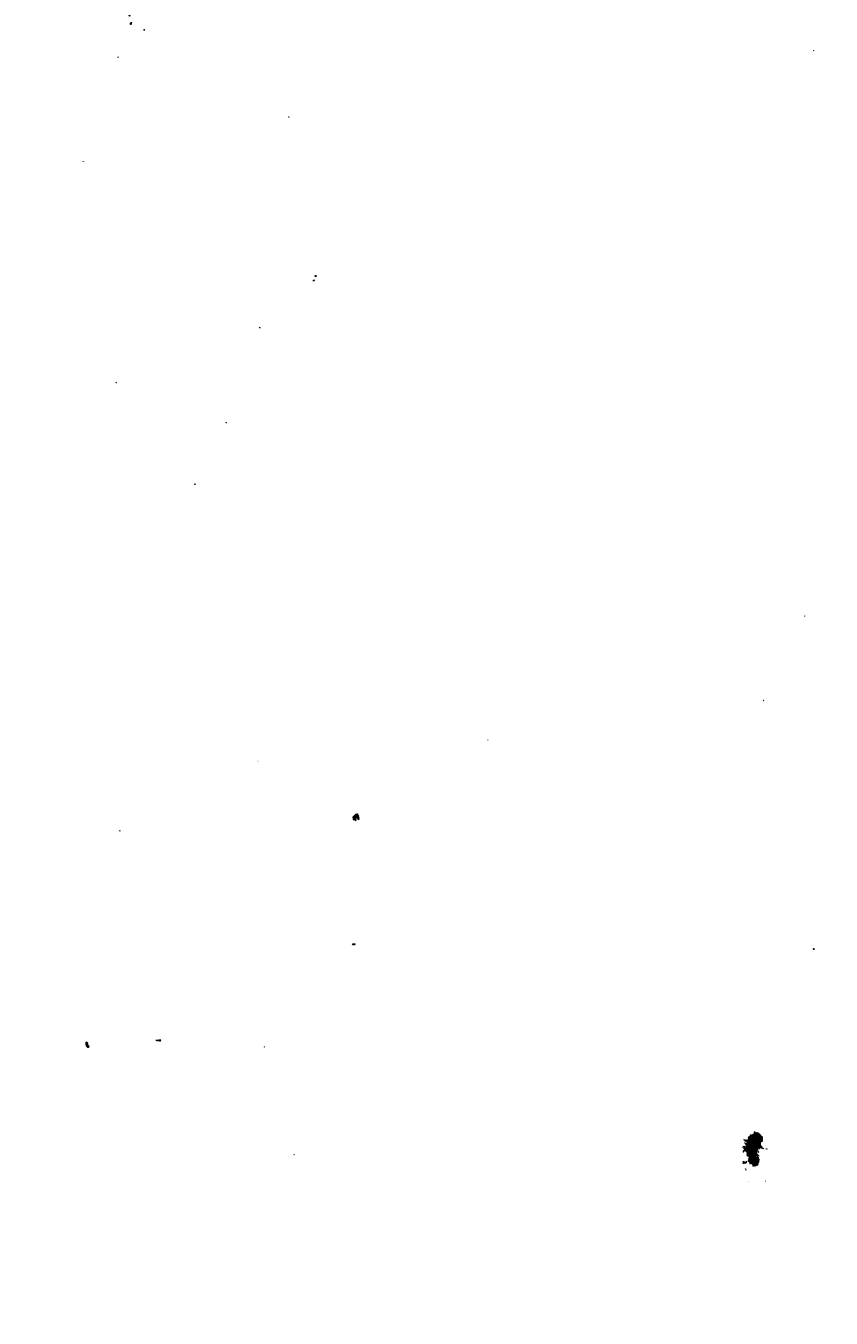
“Dear heart, be valiant, and mind the pure Spirit of God in thee, to guide thee up to God; to thunder down all deceit within and without. So farewell; God Almighty keep you all.”

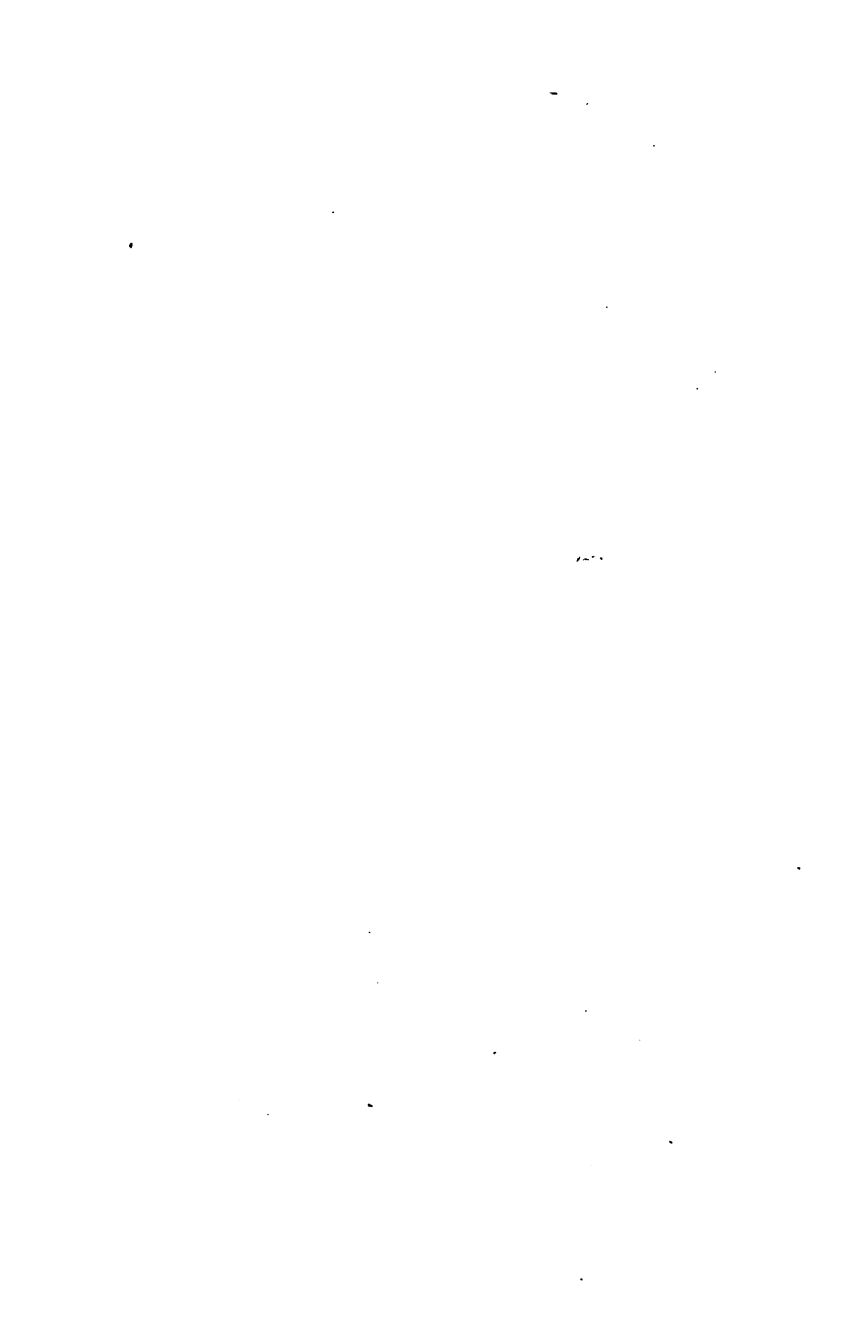












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